CONFLICT RESOLUTION: PROACTIVE TECHNIQUES

SONYA NASSER, JD
Customer Relations Business Analyst
City of Ocala Utilities
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

• Conflict resolution is a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them.

It is really confusing!!!

Four

No Three
THIS IS ......... I AM DONE WITH YOU

Everyone has had to deal with an angry customer at least once.
HOW DO WE DEAL WITH ANGRY CUSTOMERS?
CONFLICT RESPONSES??

Unhealthy responses to conflict:
An inability to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person

Healthy responses to conflict:
The capacity to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person
RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

• **Unhealthy** responses to conflict:
  • Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions

• **Healthy** responses to conflict:
  • Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions
BRAINSTORM POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS

• Come up with ideas to resolve conflict and be creative.
• Try to maximize (not minimize) your options. (it’s ok to have many options to choose from)
• Look for win-win solutions, or compromises, in which both parties get something they want. (i.e. School board utility disputes)
• Find a way to make other side’s decision easy
The ability to successfully resolve conflict depends on your ability to:

1- Manage stress quickly while remaining alert and calm.

2- Control your emotions and behavior.

3- Pay attention to the feelings being expressed.

4- Be aware of and respectful of differences.
LISTEN FIRST

• First step to resolve the issue is to stop and listen
Listening Skills

• Be attentive and patient.
• Be sincere.
• Be calm.
First Step to Conflict Resolution

- 1- How do you Diffuse the anger facing you?
VENTING
Diffuse the Anger

• **Allow them to vent.** Needs to let off steam and release the anger that may have been brewing for a long time.
• **To get the listener's attention.** Wants to know that you are paying attention. Use your body language to show this.
• **To be heard.** Listen to their point of view and acknowledge the feelings you hear so that the speaker knows you appreciate how angry she is.
• **To be understood.** Wants someone to appreciate how they feel
Empathy

• Empathy is a two-way street. It's about sharing vulnerabilities and an emotional connection. To truly practice empathy you have to share your own inner landscape
Ask Problem Solving Questions

• Instead of giving them the answer, try to ask the right question.

• **Ask Why?** Why do you want an extension?

• **Ask Why Not?** Why not try various utility options available. i.e. prepaid

• **Ask What If?** What if we gave you 2 more days on the extension?
Ask for their advice

• These are utilities policies and procedures that I have to adhere to. How would you suggest I proceed given our ordinances?
• What makes your position fair to the utility?
• You must have good reasons to believe it’s a fair solution, I would like to hear them.
POWER OF AN APOLOGY
James Woods and Apology from CEO
Refframe

Redirecting the other person’s attention away from positions and toward the task of

(a) identifying the interests
(b) inventing creative options, and
(c) discussing fair standards for selecting an option.
Take Responsibility

• Focus on understanding the resolution
• Treat the situation and not the other side as the problem.
• Assumptions (Do not make them)
• Options to rectify the situation
• Taking responsibility widens options of how to apologize and address the situation.
HOW CAN WE APOLOGIZE EFFECTIVELY?

• The center of the attention needs to be the receiver.
• The receiver does not hear excuses or is blamed
• i.e. I am sorry we didn’t turn on your service last week, but we were short staffed.
Find solutions to satisfy needs

- Problem-solve by generating multiple alternatives
- Determine which actions will be taken
- Make sure involved parties buy into actions. (Total silence may be a sign of passive resistance.) Be sure you get real agreement from everyone.
AGREEMENT

When you come up with an agreement how do you handle it???
Settlement Agreement

• Must be in writing
• Make sure all parties sign
• Do not use any ambiguous writing
• Payment amount clearly defined
• Make sure the payment plan has defined timeframe for payment as well as payment location and/or payment method.